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Weeds and Wild Flowers

MOWRY BELL

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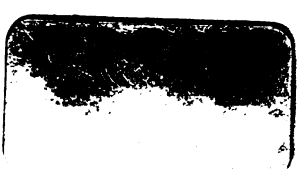

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WEEDS AND WILD FLOWERS

By

MOWRY BELL

Boston
RICHARD G. BADGER
The Gorham Press
1908

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WOODS AND HILLS

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THE LOON

I lie on the bank of the lake
  In the balmy breeze of June,
And listen, half awake,
  To the waves' monotonous tune;
When I hear with delight, in his headlong
    flight,
  The eerie call of the loon.

He glides to the lake's cool breast
  Down the feathery planes of air,
And sports with a joyous zest
  That mocks at my haunting care.
In his wanton glee he laughs at me,
  As he dives for his finny fare.

"Ho ho! for the man from the town,
  To his cultured needs a slave!
Who trembles when dark skies frown,
  And toils from his birth to his grave;
Who never can know," he laughs, "ho ho ho!
  The joys of the winds and the wave!"

The clouds float lazily on:
  The ripples are lapping the shore.
A dragon fly comes, and is gone:
  There's the distant sound of an oar.
And farther away from across the bay
  Comes the laugh of the loon as before.

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You have left, cheery friend, as we part,
(He is now but a speck in the blue,)
A yearning that fills my heart
For a life more simple and true:
I would flee from the strain of the strife for gain,
And at luxury laugh with you!

THE YUCCAS

(Antelope Valley, California)

The wind is in the yuccas, like the roll
Of mimic waves upon a hill-girt mere,
Or sea of tossing boughs: the night, star-clear,
Shows yet unmoved each rugged branch and bole.
As from a world unseen that murmur stole:
Weird in the gloom these uncouth forms appear.
Is night but the day's absence? Surely here
There is a presence: night has gained a soul!
Is it the spell that this fantastic tree
Has put upon the plain? Star speaks to star:
Northward to where the dusk-hid mountains are
The gossip-laden wind is coursing free.
It is a goblin world, and faint and far
Sound the spent echoes of reality!

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STRAWBERRY HILL

This morning at daybreak I woke up and said:
"I'll be off to the orchard while all are in bed."
And there, as I dressed, just as still, just as still,
Came a bird to the window and perched on the sill.
He twisted his head, then he flew to a tree:
" Tr-r-r-r-r tee, tit-a-wee!"
Do you know what that meant? "Oh, the berries are red,
The berries are rip'ning on Strawberry Hill!"

For I and the birds we are pretty good chums:
I've many a secret to pay for my crumbs.
I think it's more fun to make friends than to kill;
And I've squirrels I call from their holes when I will.
All the wood folks are shy folks, but many know me:
"Tr-r-r-r-r tee, tit-a-wee!"
Each summer some sort of a messenger comes
Saying dinner is ready on Strawberry Hill!

When the woods are all green and the sky is so blue,
It's fun just to lie in the grass and look through
At the water beyond, when you've eaten your fill,
With a pail to take home and a plenty left still
For the birds and the insects. For berries are free.
" Tr-r-r-r-r tee, tit-a-wee!"
Go get you a pail and I'll show it to you.
Hurrah! for a ramble on Strawberry Hill!

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A SUMMER VISITOR

Softly the mellow air
  Breathes as it passes
Scents that are sweet and rare
  Caught 'mongst the grasses.

Calm in their azure sea
  White clouds sail over:
Wee voices call to me
  Out of the clover:

Buzzing from bees afield,
  Gay wards of summer,
Gathering what blossoms yield
  Free to each comer.

Bird-songs from every bough,
  Bright fancies fusing:—
What was that sound just now
  Startled my musing?

What that quick, shadowy gleam
  Here 'mongst my flowers,
Poised like a passing dream
  In young Love's bowers?

Cloud-spirit, come from far
  O'er my sweets hovering; —
Guest from a distant star
  Earth's joys discovering?

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Lo, the wee whir evolved!
  From mists engirdling
Will-o'-the-wisp resolved
  Into a birdling!

There on yon twig he sits;
  Pert, self-reliant;
Puzzling his tiny wits
  O'er me, rude giant.

Sipper of coy delights,
  Ruby-throat, prattle!
How may such tiny sprites
  Face the world's battle?

Mouths to feed dainty fare,
  Foes to be shunning,—
Surely a load of care
  For thy small cunning!

Why tilt thy bill so high?
  Is't a misgiving
As to how wingless I
  Get me a living?

Idle it is to stand
  Doubting each other:
Both by the same free hand
  Are fed, wee brother!

Off to thy sweets with thee
  Where the whim snatch thee!
Emblem of Fantasy,
  Care cannot catch thee!

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IN EXILE

The odor of orange blows
  Comes heavy from over the way,
And winter looks down from his mountain snows
  On a morn as of May,
Where gardens their wealth of palm and rose
    Display.

The earth and the sun have done their part
  In glories of color and scent,
And callous the man to decry an art
  So lavishly spent.
Is there something amiss that there lacks in my heart
    Content?

I hear them extol the worth
  Of the changeless, peaceful clime,
And pity the pains of their friends of the north
  In the winter time;
And I see the buds of the almond put forth
    And the lime.

'Tis vain! I long for the sturdier life,
  And a winter's stress unstayed:
I love the grandeur of storm-cloud strife
  With its cannonade,
And a changing scene as the flowers grow rife
    And fade.

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The loon and the wild goose break
  The calm as they northward roam:
I smell the breeze from the woods and the lake
  And the thawing loam.
They call me: "Why didst thou, O brother, forsake
    Thy home?"

A child of that other clime, I know
  The charm of the boom and crack
Of the ice, and the glistening fields of snow
  On the blizzard's track.
They call me: "O brother, the quick years flow:
    Come back!"

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OLD MOTHER OF THE SHADOWS

In the woods, in the ferny gloom
Where trilliums bloom,
  Afar and away from here,
There tarries an ancient crone alone,
  With never a neighbor near.

And oft when the foot of Care
I hear on my stair,
  I steal by a postern gate
Where wooed by the wandering breeze my trees
  Lisp low, and my coming await.

And oft when the day-star fades,
Through the whispering shades
  I follow my well-worn way,
And toward the red spark of her fire draw nigher,
  Aglow through the twilight gray.

My foster-mother is she,
With a welcome for me
  That I feel though she speak no word,
And over her fire with a frown bent down
  Seem never my step to have heard.

The secret I'm sure she knows
Of all that grows,
  And keen through the jealous dark
With an eye undimmed by the years she peers,
  Through the tangle of leaf and bark.

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I sit at her feet and list,
Like an alchemist
  In his search for the baffling gold,
To the marvels of curious lore that pour
  From her lips so pursed and old.

In a crooning song she sings
Of all wondrous things
  That quicken the world's dull zest,
Till, lulled by her magic art, my heart
  Is eased of its old unrest.

Once all but asleep I lay
At the close of day,
  Abask in the sunset's gleam,
When fair and young in the wood she stood.
  I know it was not a dream.

Aye, I feel that her shape uncouth
Is a mask of youth,
  And it cries to my soul, "Rejoice!"
From the depths of her eyes it springs, and rings
  In the tones of her silvery voice.

Ah, motherkin, what care I
If the wolf be nigh,
  Or the world at my fancies flout!
My peace no care shall consume till the gloom
  Shall show me thy watch-fire out!

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SOME DAYS

There are some days when Nature seems to brood
In doubt and gloom: a look her features wear
As when from hollow eyes peers forth despair
With glance of mute appeal. In somber mood
The clouds hang threatening, and the woods, subdued,
In dread expectance lift their arms in air.
The songless birds the prevalent sadness share,
And ply half-heartedly the search for food.
Fitfully wail lorn gusts: the crisis nears,
When Nature's heart, o'erburdened with its pain,
Swells till it bursts in floods of relieving rain.
The next morn breaks: with face still bathed in tears,
She smiles at her despair, her faithless fears,
Draws back her veil, and greets the sun again!

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BY HEDGE AND HIGHWAY

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A' ORDINARY MAN

My mother thought I's smart 's a whip
  When I was still a kid;
And so did I. 'Twas long before
  I waked, but wake I did;
And see that 'twas in her, not me,
  That estimate began;
That after all I'm what you'd call
  A' ordinary man.

I fooled my wife too. 'Spose 'twas love
  That made 'em both so blind;
But now 'f I say I'm no great shakes,
  She says she likes that kind.
She seems contented too, and yit
  She ought be'n rich and gran',
And not the wife all through her life
  Of a' ordinary man.

This little gal upon my knee,
  Her dad, you may depen',
She thinks is one o' the 'way-'way-ups
  Among the sons o' men.
When she finds out — she'll love me still,
  Though on a different plan;
For find she must that I am just
  A' ordinary man.

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By gum, there's times when Providence
  Just rubs it in! No paint
Can't cover up the spots. You see
  What y'ought to be but ain't.
To think what you should do fer 'em
  And then think what you can:
It makes you sore 'at y'ain't no more
  'N a' ordinary man!

TIDES

Says the blindly heaving sea:
"There's a power that masters me;
Coming, going ceaselessly,
  Through ages vast.
With a longing vague oppressed
Heave the surges on my breast:
Never, never may I rest
  While earth shall last."

In man's breast in silence courses
Power from celestial sources;
Sluggish depths to action forces;
  From rest debars.
While he toils or while he sings
Come yearnings after higher things;
Lifting from earth to which he clings,
  Toward the stars!

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THE CONFLICT

Time was all land lay prisoned 'neath the surge
Of shoreless seas. Old ocean, ruling all,
Anon sees, frowning, on his watery ball
With slow uplifts or sudden throes emerge
His ancient slave, as whom pent passions urge.
Soon continents, exulting at the fall
Of their late master, laugh at his hoarse call
To yield, his ceaseless thundering at the verge.
Yet still he fumes and threatens far and near;
Like a shrewd general at the foeman's van
Making fierce onslaught, while with careful plan
He sends a force attacking in the rear.
So stealthy clouds creep landwards, and the rain
Captures the hills unnoticed, grain by grain.

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OUR FAIRY PALACE

In what enchanted palace, by the might
Of genii uplifted, could we be
So circumgirt with breath of mystery
Or wildering beauty as to the blest sight
Of those that love her earth reveals? The night
Has marvels all undreamed of witchery
To charm her children: day with footsteps free
Leads them through scenes o'erbrimming with delight.
And court and corridor and vaulted hall
Men tread, and know but cobweb and decay;
Yon crystal stream passed by, whose waters stray
Through these our palace grounds, and quick recall
The sight to eyes grown dim; there laving, all
These dead had cast their cerements away!

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JOY

The world hath lived long, long,
One burden to its song.

Yet sons of earth ne'er doubt
Joy's from without;

And seek, while the years flit,
The source of it.

With every wish supplied
'Tis still denied.

The while the lowliest cot
It scorneth not,

And greeteth from each breeze
Him who can seize.

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AT THE GLASS

My lady sat before her glass
  The while her maid arranged her hair:
  She gazed upon a face more fair
Than one may see at Michaelmas
Within an hour, while hundreds pass.
  Yet at the graces pictured there
  She sighed, "Yea, even this I'd spare
To know me fair within, alas!"
Ah, lady, pools and brooks may vie,
  Assisted by the art of man,
To show thy beauty to the eye;
  But neither thou nor friendship can
Sound thy true self, in part or whole:
There is no mirror for the soul!

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A WEARER OF THE PURPLE

I sat, a monarch, in my own domain,
  Receiving tribute levied from a crowd
  Of neighboring potentates. My head deep bowed,
I marked the absent, and with stern disdain
Scowled dark at flatteries breathed my smile to gain.
  Gloom, like some huge, vile bird, with smothering
    cloud
  Of swarthy plumage, from my heart once proud,
Now self-sick, hatched black thoughts in dismal train.
There came a lightning flash. My night it rent;
  And showed my court in all its tinseled state.
Straightway I hurried forth with soul unpent.
  At other courts a wanderer now I wait,
And render lowly service. Yet, content,
  I revel in the sun and bless my fate!

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THE LOST LYRE

I knew her not when in Love's guise she came
  And from my yielding fingers slipped my lyre:
  So fair she seemed, in simple, sweet attire,
That lost in her eyes I did not ask her name;—
Lost in those eyes that gave no hint of flame
  To burst relentless from a smouldering fire!
  Through field and grove I followed, to the mire,
Where she eluded me and mocked my shame.
And now 'mongst youths and maids she wandering sings
  A song seductive from a heart of stone:
Her plunder, smiles of innocence, the wings
Of aspiration; these and such like things.
  The notes of my stolen lyre blend with her own
  In silvery cadence. Ah, I should have known!

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THE CLUE

What if, O dearest heart, upon a day
When I had left thee smiling, death should break
The bonds that bind my soul, and I should wake,
And hastening to thee lorn, find but thy clay;
Thy spirit loosed as mine and fled away,—
Away into the void! Thee to o'ertake
Amid those myriad worlds were task to slake
The fires of hope, and bid the faint heart stay!
Yet whisper, Love, if to such starry quest
Through lingering ages I be doomed by fate,
Some clue, that I may know thee, dispossessed
Of bodily features, or reincarnate
In some strange form. Ah, must I learn thus late
That but thy house I know, not thee, its guest?

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RETROSPECT

From out the roseate Past the breezes bring
Sweet sounds and odors, as of the woods in spring.

Round me the arid Present lies, its face
Thick covered with the dust of commonplace.

Yet, touched by the wand of Time, this scene like that
Will beam with a beauty I shall marvel at.

Ah! for the clearer view that will have dawned
When I look backward from the hills beyond,

That daily to my soul there might appear
The hidden glory of the Now and Here!

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DISILLUSIONMENT

The desolation of the childish heart
When through the robe of fancy there appears
The framework of gaunt fact, the sorry tears
When Santa Claus proves false and fays depart,—
Ah me, 'tis but a presage of the smart
Of disillusionment in after years,
When cherished idols fall, 'mid critics' jeers,
And shadows linger over mead and mart.
But, as in some old tale, there comes a day
When the sad scene takes on a livelier hue;
Moss-covered mounds and tree-trunks old and gray
Prove gnomes and dryads, hiding from our view;
For we have learned to spell old charms anew,
And earth turns fairy-land, wherein we stray.

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IN THE AFTERGLOW

In some sequestered chamber of the mind
Are stored our dreams from out the long ago,
Which fancy, some day, wandering to and fro
Through those deserted halls, shall haply find,
And from their prison loose. To fate resigned,
Then shall we sit in life's calm afterglow,
And nodding note, scant moved by grief or woe,
The past's unwearying procession wind.
Yea, now in memory's cloisters day and night
Toil clever artists to design and weave
Stuffs for that pageant, tinct with the old delight;
Treasures the pilfering years shall never reave;
Gay banners all with blazonry bedight,
And paintings that not Raphael could achieve.

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THE IMMUTABLE

Ephemerally fair
On summer-scented air
Rides the winged thistledown with undulant motion:
Age-long the stubborn rock
Defies the tempest's shock,
The blundering, booming cannonade of ocean.

Soul, what wilt thou take
An abiding nest to make?
Gold is the wind's toy, fame but shadows waving.
Fleeting are rocks and seas:
Dreams are realities:
Man will not read the rune of Nature's graving.

Upon the cloud that yields
Rain to the thirsting fields
Fasten thy gossamer with faith enduring:
Upborne o'er earthly ills
When quake the riven hills,
And tempests drive, secure shall be thy mooring!

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MORES MUTANTUR

Time was from churchly council and consistory
Rang but the tones of hate, self-righteous thundering
Against foul heresy; when prelates' blundering
Filled life with fear, and stained the page of history;
When bigot's lance and theologic bistoury
Probed to the quick, and shrank not back from sundering
Belief and life, God-joined; rapine and plundering
Winked at, if but revered each monkish mystery.
Though oft with our incense still past arch and oriel
Rise heathen prayer and theologic platitude,
Though men still live with hearts inquisitorial,
Sectarian bigots, narrow and malevolent;
Yet minds have broadened, changed is the general attitude,
And thought is free and tolerance is prevalent!

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'TWIXT ENTERING AND OUTGOING

What means the endless throng, whose jostling
masses
Pass through this narrow vale? I sit and ponder
Beside the highway, while my comrades wander
From hill to hill, where yawn two gloomy passes,
The entrance and the exit. Here sweet grasses
And lowly flowers are blooming, ever fonder
To my rapt vision; down the valley yonder
Are strife and danger, pitfalls and morasses.
And many burdened come into this valley,
Or suffering leave, knowing scant joy or laughter;
While others here with song and pastime dally.
A lawless rout it seems; yet who, not knowing
What was before or what shall follow after,
May judge this step 'twixt entering and outgoing?

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THE HUNGRY HEART

Leagues of unresting tide
  Hold us apart:
Years leave unsatisfied
  The hungry heart.

Earth's endless grain-fields lie
  Spread to the sun:
Such care for the body, aye:
  For the soul, none?

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'TWERE EASIER OFTEN

'Twere easier often, when an adverse tide
Seems to resist all skill of sail and oar,
And bear us, storm-tossed, from a long-sought shore,
Rather than struggle on when hope has died,
To seek oblivion from the vessel's side:
When we read doubt in eyes that loved before,
To sink beneath the waves and rise no more
Were easier far than still to strive and bide.
But nobler 'tis, and worthier of a man
Than leaving task undone and sullied name
For friends to whisper with a blush of shame,
To bear our buffetings as freemen can,
Bravely and cheerily through our little span,
Undaunted by adversity or blame!

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DISCOVERY

Age upon age had passed
Before men found
  At last
That the earth was round.

And men have often died,
  Perchance,
And have not known
Of any other side
  To circumstance
Except their own.

Self to ignore
  And take another's view
Of deeds and days
Is to know more
  Than Galileo knew
Of the earth's ways.

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THE PARTING WALL

I know not, dearest, when the time may be
That I shall follow thee through the dark door,
But when it comes, O Love gone on before,
Come back for me!

God is not cruel, stern though his decree:
Joys he took from us he has still in store!
He cannot mean that we should meet no more:
Come back for me!

A task is set me here. When I am free,
When the last rites are said and partings o'er,
Leave me not desolate by that trackless shore:
Come back for me!

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THE GENIE OF GOLD

A genie of an eastern tale he seems,
The imp of gold, a grinning, round-faced wight,
Who gains his master every wished delight:
Food, princely garb, the maiden of his dreams;
Brings to fruition all his treasured schemes;
Erects a fairy palace in a night,
Succors the poor, relieves the orphans' plight;
With royal gifts a doubtful past redeems.
But if he gain the upper hand, ah me!
His weary victims, knowing no peace, yet nod,
Soul-starved, sense-fed, in dull satiety.
What wearying, aimless round is theirs to plod!
Yet see this gaping rabble bow the knee!
Fools! 'tis a truckling slave, and not a god!

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE PINES

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THE TUTELAGE

In the coiled shell sounds Ocean's distant roar:
Oft to our listening hearts come heavenly strains;—
Men say, "That was the blood in our own veins,
And this,— but the echo of our hope; no more."
And yet, the murmuring sea exists, which bore
That frail creation o'er its watery plains;
And on Time's sands full many a shell remains
Tossed by Eternity upon its shore.
Its tongue our hope from Nature's self has caught.
Matter nor force is lost as eons roll;
And mind?— Love life conserves and death abates,—
Through the long ages this has Nature taught.
Under the stars she plights the wistful soul:
"Life ruled by Love nor dies nor dissipates!"

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THE AGNOSTIC

God hath hid his face. Shall I despise
  My reason, which (when there is less at stake)
In all things save these highest men so prize,—
  The Word shall I take

For guide, much altered, writ by man at first?
  Should one bear light by day to view his path
And quench it, when by night he stumbleth worst,
  And most need hath?

If by the light God gave I go astray,
  Deny him and the myths men weave before him,
He will not chide, but grieve should I flee its ray,
  E'en to adore him.

So I must say his face is hid from me:
  Perchance to others he hath seen fit to show it.
Behind the veil love ruleth — it may be:
  I do not know it.

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His presence yet I seem to feel, and yield
To the feeling: though 'twere false, I would be hoping.
This sure: if he is, 'tis purposely afield
He hath left us groping.

My duty still is plain and at my hand,
Though over things most dear close drawn the curtain.
So much the wise of many an age and land
Have held as certain:

That to know truth one must be pure in heart;
Self-love is cankerous; pleasures of vice are hollow;
Love leadeth highest. O God, if thou art,
Help me to follow!

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WE SHAPE US GODS

We shape us gods, not out of wood and stone,
But of the clay of thought, in the dim light
Of earth-drawn fancy, forms to awe or fright,
Or fair, but aye less fair than men we have known.
So Omar fashioned his, then cynic grown,
Mocked his grim gamester, godlike but in might.
Yet glows like faint aurora through the night
From his dark lines a hope he would not own.
Small glimpse of the divine as yet we've caught:
Nature, too lightly read, has given men
Less wisdom than the child, by rude alarms
Waked from his sleep, who, understanding naught
Of smoke and glare and tumult, sleeps again,
Content that he can feel his father's arms.

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THE RESISTLESS

Upon a summery tide I lie and float.
Above, the blue sky smiles: a soft wind brings
Perfume from sunny isles. I hear the note
Of birds, and see the flash of radiant wings.

I am adrift upon a wintry sea.
Wildly the tempest shrieks: the clouds roll dark
In serried columns, hurrying sullenly.
The fierce waves threaten to o'erwhelm my bark.

There is a current underneath my keel:
I ride, I know now, on the whirlpool's breast!
Summer and winter pass: nearer I feel
The center. Vexed no more, at peace I rest.
All rudderless, and ever with speed more swift,
Into the vortex of God's love I drift!

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THE PLUNGE

Two stood upon the world-brink wonderingly
Ere the momentous plunge. Said one, "I fear
The glitter of false aims may blind my eyes:
I would God made my lot an arduous one.
Hardship and pain, seeing 'tis but a life
And the end great, I crave that I may learn."
The other, "So self-evident it is,
This dire mistake of men, life's sacrifice
For that which perishes, no fear have I
Of failing thus; and 'twere the sterner test
With chance for self-indulgence to stand firm.
I would have wealth to prove me what I am!"
Then at the door of infancy they knocked,
And entered life and life's oblivion.

Fate brought to each the gifts he had desired.
And after years again, as it befell,
They met, the work-worn plowman in the field,
And on his velvet steed the man of wealth.
The worker sighing, "Ah, his happy lot!"
Turned to his holy toil, God's husbandry,
Unknowing his high task, but thereby schooled.
The other seeing, pitied the poor serf,
Himself most pitiable of all God's works;

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Living for pleasure, yet least sensible
Of men to pleasure of the mind or sense,
The cup of earth's delights drained to the dregs;
A sailor of smooth seas, living in fear
Of rumored storms, to him as yet unknown.

THE SUMMONS

A sad soul peered into the night without,
Whom sudden a grim shape faced. "Behold me —
Death!"
"Woe, woe is me! Oh, grant for a deed devout
One short day's respite ere my final breath!"
"No moment! Come!" "Grant me an hour's delay,
That I may pay to love a debt I owe!
I cannot leave it thus!" "We must away.
'Tis vain, O soul!" "No word to kindred?" "No!"
"I would repent!" "Too late to make amends!"
"Now, now must I account for years ill spent?"
A smile to the angel's face rare beauty lends:
"Nay, soul," he says, "Fear not! Thy life was meant
To teach, not try. Each flower its lesson hath,
And thou'st had thine. Now cometh love, not
wrath!"

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WORLD TO WORLD

The child that peers abroad into the dark,
Where mystery broods and fear is coiled to spring,
Feels no more terror than such souls as cling
Close to tradition's robe, when first they hark
To whisperings of worlds beyond the arc
Of their hemmed vision. "Welcomer the sting
Of death, than this sad blight on everything!"
They cry, fearing to quench Faith's waning spark.
To the mind's playthings we like children all
Cling fondly, to their imperfections blind;
But childhood once outgrown, its pleasures pall,
And we, when world to world we pass, shall find
A purer joy, be sure, for those let fall;
A sweeter hope for each one left behind!

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THE COMING OF PEACE

A dreamy languor spread from bourne to bourne:
The birds sang soothingly: hushed was the blast
To amorous sighs. "Could this," I cried, "but last,
That going leaves us only more forlorn!"
Thereat my soul rose up in sudden scorn.
"Fool! has thy lot in better worlds been cast,
That aye with this, which pleases God, thou hast
Some flaw to find, some blot on eve or morn?"
Lord of his fate indeed is he who wills
His life into accordance with God's ways:
For him sunshine or rain sweet peace distils;
And by the light of unremorseful days
He finds those heights, whence seen all earthly ills
Shine fiery golden in the sunset rays.

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SALVAGE

When winds were moaning in the dreary wastes
Of night's slow hours, a grim thought held me bound.
"O soul," it whispered, "thou that truth wouldst
know,
What of these warm affections that seem part
Of thine own self, — hold'st thou them aught but
flesh,
And of the flesh? Think'st thou to bear them forth
To worlds beyond? Behold, when thou putt'st off
Thine earthly robes, all love evoked by sex
Thou putt'st off too; yea, and the love for clan,
And closest kindred, even wife and child
In greater part. With all the beasts and birds
Thou sharest these. Of earth and flesh are they;
God-given surely, yet of that great corps
Of men and things, of talent, circumstance,
Which are thy ministers, to teach thee truth.
But this remains: as much as thou hast learned
To feel of love for those to thee unbound,
And unattractive to thine earthly sense;
The poor, the foolish, those that thwart thee oft,
Love toward God, and through him toward all his:
If thou hast aught of this, that shalt thou hold."
Heart-sick I heard, and answered not again.

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FATHER LOVE

I stood beside my darling as she slept:
Simply from love of her I could have wept.
Simply from love of her, 'twas hard to keep
From marring by fond embrace her child-
hood's sleep.

Within my breast, with father love aflame,
Two voices spoke, but not from me they
came:

"Ah, that she might remain so pure in heart,
And ne'er grow wayward, ne'er from my
side depart;
That I might shield from shocks and rude
alarms!"

"'Tis so God feels, and has her in his arms!
With deeper love than thine, through every
ill,
Through doubt, through sin, be sure he holds
her still!"

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THE SECOND VOLUME

In the groined alcoves of an ancient tower
Amid a wealth of treasured tomes I found
A little book, in choicest vellum bound;
Therein a romance of such magic power
It held me rapt through many a tranced hour;
And then, the threads of interest all unwound,
Abruptly closed. I searched that palace round,
And for its mate still earth's preserves I scour.
Perchance that was the whole? Then purposeless
The pain of conflict, and the bitter doubt
But half resolved; love in a dire distress
Deserted, baffled, with its joy left out.
Could life so end, half told; its school so fail?—
Soul, soul, there is a sequel to thy tale!

STAGES

Said she of the jewels and lace
  Of her of the rags and dirt:
"This beautiful world is sure no place
For a thing so vile, with its sin-stained face
  And a soul inert!"

Said the angel to one by his side
  "Who the depths of God's love can tell!
We love the poor mortal by misery tried,
But the other, who scorns her in virtuous pride,
  He loves, as well!"

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THE GUEST

There came a man across the moor
  Yestre'en when the west was red:
He turned aside to our house door
  To ask for bread.

Cheery he was, with clothes all torn,
  Out elbow and bare knee:
He was not to the begging born,
  As one might see.

Long time we spake. To bed and board
  I bade him: who could less?
A messenger sent by the Lord
  My hearth to bless!

He came, he said, to our burn-side
  Seeking for work and bread:—
Ah, 'twas for me he hither hied,
  Who was as dead:

Me, who with cot and cow and land
  In fear of want must fret:
He, naught in purse or future, and
  Unconquered yet!

Now in thy presence stand I, Lord,
  My faithless past confessed,
And praise thee that thou didst accord
  Such angel guest!

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LAW

Crystal within my tube,
  Forming before my face,
How buildest thou thy cube,
  Each molecule in place?

Without or lime or sand
  Thy ramparts rise compact:
Without or eye or hand
  Each angle is exact.

Nay, here I see a flaw.—
  No mind to judge thou hast:
Thou followest blind law,
  Which binds and holds thee fast!

Wee cell my lens below,
  In vain my thought is stirred
To grasp how thou canst grow
  To form the perfect bird.

Each feather, every tint
  To child from parent steals
Through thee. Hast thou no hint
  Of structure that reveals?

Yet, when by circumstance
  Set wrong, thou provest blind:
No power to right mischance! —
  Law rules in thee; not mind!

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Behold this mighty law
  That governs all things here:
The mountain and the straw,
  The atom and the sphere;

That smites missteps with death,
  Yet stoops man's whim to meet:
That gives the infant breath
  And speeds the murderer's feet!

Ah, 'tis but surface play,
  This dumb and heartless show;
These animals that prey,
  This pain and grief we know!

It is the blinding mist
  That hides the sun above.
Life's higher forms exist
  But by their spark of love.

Love is conservative:
  Malice and hate destroy.
Those only gain who give,
  And naught but love breeds joy.

Storms rage and souls grow strong
  In buffeting with doubt,
By battling with the wrong
  Within us and without.

Deep searching still we feel
  That tenderness abides;
Behind the mask of steel
  A love that lives and guides!

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FOR CUBA

(April, 1898)

No precedent, ye say,
To point the glorious way
Toward help for one downtrod in blood and tears?
Brothers, 'tis time there were!
We bare our swords for her,
And set a model for the coming years!

This act, to end her pain,
Without a hope of gain,
Its like on history's page where can ye read?
Humanity and God
Call us to paths untrod!
On, brothers, on! We follow not, but lead!

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THE LEAGUE OF GOLD

(April, 1898)

God of the nations, speak!
  We who would fain do right,
We who would succor the weak
  Pray for thy guiding light!
We, by these two beset:
  A nation in craft grown old,
And at home, more potent yet,
  The sway of the league of gold!

Is it, as men maintain
  (The wise), but a lust for land?
Have we no thought but gain?
  Shall we our pay demand?
Nay, we will hail them free;
  Yield them a place and a name!
Carve they their lot as we,
  Freed from the leash of shame!

Give them a title clear!
  Well have they fought their fight.
God of the nations, hear!
  Help us to seek the right!
Us, by these two beset:
  A nation in guile grown old,
And at home, more potent yet,
  The sway of the league of gold!

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SONG OF THE ARMY OF THE SECOND REVOLUTION

Too long, too long have we suffered ill,
  Oppressed in the land that bore us:
We have dropped the scepter and bowed our will,
  Till our sin has risen before us;
But kings are we between sea and sea:
  Let us brook no despot o'er us!

We have conquered our foes by field and flood,
  To suffer with tame submission
The growth at home of a tyrant brood
  That stifles each loved tradition:
We have loosed our hold to the hosts of gold
  And the parasite politician!

In vain was the blood of our fathers spent
  The fetters of old to sunder?
We have paid small heed to their government:
  Who would, we have let him plunder.
But risen like grain from the hill and the plain
  We come to retrieve our blunder!

In a muffled march, with cannon nor drum,
  With our silent pact unbroken,
We come, in the power of God we come!
  The doom of the spoiler is spoken!
Ye may hear in the beat of a myriad feet
  The sure, implacable token.

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And him who barters a public trust
  We hound to the country's borders:
And shame be his lot till his flesh be dust!
  Aye, these are our sovereign orders.
Be "traitor" his brand; through an angry
    land
  Pursued by the nation's warders.

O God of the battle, of heart and field,
  Give strength to our high endeavor!
To gold or fear may we scorn to yield
  Till body and soul dissever:
May we seek acclaim for our country's name
  Though our own be lost forever!

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SHADOWS

June's witchery on this meadow lays its spell:
A thousand insect lovers pipe content:
The south wind, with intoxicating scent
Lulls the soul's doubts and whispers, "All is well!"
Away with surface shows! I know the hell
Of misery beneath, untouched by this
World-rapture of the summer; where life's bliss
Is bale, and naught but pain and hardships dwell.
And yet — how shallow was the moment's doubt;
Far shallower than the peace it spurned! Shall we
Defer all joy until we can make out
The plan that shall resolve life's mystery?
O sweet caressing airs! O blest repose!
Evil and suffering — ah, he knows, he knows!

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THE BLUE MEADOW

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THE HERMIT

I lived a hermit: for the fault of one
Fled from my kind, and housing 'mongst
the hills.
One day — a chance misstep upon a crag,
A slip, a plunge — I knew that life no more;
For when I waked I found another world.

Behold, I lay upon a mountain peak,
Or so at first it seemed, and stillness reigned;
A silence unconceived pressed on my sense
Through the black night. The stars, more
brilliant far
Than yet my eyes had seen, unclouded shone
From out an ebony dome. Upon a bed
Of down I lay; but restless was my thought,
And quick I turned to rise and seek my home.
Lo, it was rock, this bed that seemed so soft!
But at the move, as one might push a ball
Swung on a cord from rafter far above,
Which first recedes, then gently comes
again,—
So I, the ball, rose from my stony couch,
And floated in the air a moment's space,
Then slowly sinking, half supported lay.

And when amazement granted power of
thought,
I rose, with caution, that I might peer down,

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As much as star-light and keen eyes would
serve,
Over the mountain side, and know what place
Was this strange spot; and walking as one
walks
Neck-deep in water, barely touching ground,
Which gives scant hold to the body's
buoyancy,
I went a space, striving to pierce the gloom.
It seemed no nearer to the circular bound
Of this apparent plain could I approach;
For ever as I went it stretched beyond,
And still beyond, and stars rose o'er the edge
And rose and rose. I watched Aldebaran
Rise from the bourne and slow ascend the
vault,
And other stars I knew: yet some were
strange.
My feet like velvet trod the rocky ways:
My voice when, weary of the silence, I
Sought to cry out, was muffled to a faint
And far-off whisper. Hungry for a sound,
I knelt and seized a stone large as myself,
And lifting it with all too little strength
With both hands hurled it to the floor of rock,
The violent motion sending me aloft.
As bubbles bursting, such the sound it made.

And to my mind not yet the truth had sunk;
But of a sudden through my dull amaze
Blew a chill blast of horror, quenching hope:
I knew myself upon a pygmy world
Afloat in space! Ah me, that such a fact,

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Repugnant to the reason, all opposed
To logic and experience should yet be!
Never a sun rose o'er that orphaned world,
Unless its mother, careless of her child,
Were some far star no larger than the rest;
Or nearer, may be, crossed the inky vault,
Unseen and silent as a passing ghost;
Like this her daughter, dead and cold and
drear.

Through time incalculable there I stayed,
Ages it seemed, nor ate nor breathed, yet
lived.
Not e'en the frightful cold could touch my life.
But aye the hunger grew within my soul
From year to year for sight of living thing.
The shapes which first I pictured creeping
slow
And springing on me from the horrid dark,
And dreaded with a fear unspeakable,
I came to long for; yet they would not come.
But lo, one time when weary consciousness
Had shrunk and hardened to the barren fact,
Feeling long since benumbed, and weariness
Itself seemed petrified, methought I heard
A whisper in my ear and felt a hand
Upon my brow. Then in a flash returned
My old lost self with all its hopes and loves;
And "Is it you?" I cried, or tried to cry,
My voice dissolving in that mocking void.
Ah me, I knew her form, her voice I heard,
Although I could not answer. Thus she
spoke:

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"Beloved, I am come a little space
To cheer your heart, age-worn and sore beset."
Then in a spasm of joy I stretched my arms,
Not knowing what I did, and would have clutched
And held her, fearing loss; but in a trice
She vanished and my arms grasped emptiness.
Too mighty was the strain: my mind dissolved,
And that world too had vanished.
Yet again
I woke, and found me in a world like this,—
One of the myriad worlds that float and turn
About far suns and manless bloom and fade.
Beside a rippling, dimpled brook I lay,
And blissful should have lain in the warm sun
Forever, glorying in the sights and sounds,
Had not the insatiable hunger of the heart
For view of human face and sound of speech
Roused me, and spurred me on my pilgrimage.
Years, life-times did I tread that globe alone.
Perpetual spring thrilled in the vibrant air,
And countless glories of the woods and fields
Tempted and fed the eye, and every sense.
Creatures there were, resplendent birds, queer beasts,
All gentle, and unknowing fear of man,
But never human form afar or near.
Once I had been content with such a world,
But now my soul would not be comforted.

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There came a day, when, resting by a wood,
I watched the clouds, and thought of what
had been.
And suddenly my sick heart throbbed and
leapt;
For strange, familiar footsteps sounded near.
Out from the slumberous shade of the still
pines
Stepped smiling she whom yet my heart
enshrined.
And that fair world seemed as a withered leaf
Beside the vision; and for very bliss
I could not speak, but sat and watched her
come.
But when I trembling rose, oblivion
Once more enwrapped her, and submerged
my sense.

When I again awoke, a shepherd's hut
On this old earth and near my old abode
Greeted my gaze, therewith glad human
forms;
And human speech my ear drank greedily,
Uncouth and rude, but welcomer to my soul
Than rain in drouth, or ship to cast-away.
For weeks my reason wandering, they said,
Here had I lain, and raved in broken words.

Now have I left those hills, and dwell with
men;
And she that drove me forth dwells by my
side.

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THE LIVING RECORD

The calm of the summer night
Has come to my window-sill,
Where I sit and dream while the old stars gleam
And the wailing wind is still.

A face from a past long dead
Has risen to haunt my sight,
And I seek relief from a buried grief
In the bosom of the night;
A balm for my heart in the slumberous folds
Of thy comforting robe, O night.

The light from those countless eyes
Is not from the stars of today,
But stars that shone in the ages flown:
'Tis the past, the past, alway.
Its eyes are upon us at every turn,
Its sorrowful eyes, alway.

'Twas hundreds of years agone
Yon beacon sent forth this light;
Though it speeds so fast through the measureless vast
That fancy shrinks from the flight.

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Had I the eye to see,
There are worlds beyond man's thought
Whose history old, while the years are told,
I could view as its deeds were wrought;
Strange forms of its days of eld discern,
As before me their lives were wrought.

Ah me, the light from earth
Is leaping the gulfs of space,
With bound nor bar or near or far
To limit its endless race:
When the years have gone and the centuries fled
It speeds in its endless race.

The past, entombed, forgot,
Still lives in the fleeing ray:
Its days as they flit in light are writ,
Alive with God for aye!

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VISITORS

I heard a sound of laughter in the gloom,
As through dark pines I sought my way at night,
Lost in the fastness of a mountain height.
From out the solemn calm, as of the tomb,
Broke this unearthly mirth, with hint of doom,
And chill to the blood. I saw a flickering light,
And tremblingly crept near. Burst on my sight
Strange fleeing forms, aglow with fiery bloom.
But one remaining, gazed as I hid at me,
And spoke with lingering laugh: "O manikin vain,
Some ages since, coming this earth to see,
We found man cowed by Nature's mystery.
Now mystery's gone! 'Science' makes all things plain!
Ho man! What new thing when we come again!"

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THE SEEMING

Often the cloud-drift and the filmy show
Of mere appearance to the unlettered mind
Picture a truth more real than hard-won facts
Of science can portray, or learning teach.
Then fact misjudged is truer than fact half-known.

Slowly the night, with furtive glances cast
Toward the faint east, sniffing the breath of morn,
On velvet steps begins to steal away.
A score of somber clouds, foolhardy, strive
To barricade the hills 'gainst day's attack;
Then, courage waning, stop faintheartedly
And die by the outpost rays. The stars alert,
Grouped in expectant circles, open-eyed
To view the approach of dawn, turn one by one,
And satisfied depart. The smiling day
Has come to deck the earth for man's delight.

So man, in ignorance arrogant, has thought
Since his first dawn put forth; deeming himself
The acme of created things, the end
And object of God's sole solicitude;
And this poor world, stage of his pygmy acts,
The cynosure of the great universe.

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And it is well. Else, dazed and terrified,
Uncomprehending how one mighty love
Should all enfold, yet single out each life,
Despair had seized his soul, a deadening blight
Of insignificance, could he once grasp
The wealth of worlds, the infinite multitudes
Of being, and of interests paramount
To his; the endless, yawning gulfs that bound
His fearful isolation, as he clings
In cringing helplessness to his wee ball;
A mote within the sunbeam of God's grace.

FROM HESPERUS

There came a spirit to a foaming brook,
Where prone I lay, cursing my wretched lot.
"Is there then sadness in this world?" he asked.
"Yea, surely," answered I, "What else, indeed?"
"Tell me," said he, with look incredulous,
"How that may be. I had not so conceived."
"It rains full oft," said I, "and skies are dull."
"That surely is no hardship — rain," said he,
"Which brings unmeasured benefits to man."
"Then poverty," I added, "has its pang."
"But flowers bloom," he cried, "and gay brooks sing!"
"Ah, flowers," said I, "There's death and cruel pain!"

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Then softer grew his speech, and with a sigh,
"Do you fear those?" he asked. "Earth is so fair,—
The fairest of all, I think, — I had not guessed
That in such boundless store of sweet delights
There had been one with heart to find a fault.
Where woods are lavish with resplendent green,
And flowers, self-planted, grow unguardedly,
Where clouds of their own motion sail the skies
In dazzling whiteness,— one could drink and drink
Unceasing joy and ne'er be satisfied.
Where winds blow here and yon at their sweet will,
Where the great dome of night, with stars beset,
Forms the flow'red pathway of a wandering moon;
Where to all these are added rainbows, storms,
Majestic in wild fury, sunsets, seas;
No moment twice the same, change following change,—
A marvelous panorama wrought for man,—
One scarce can speak for rapture. Then the voice
Of birds and waves, the whispering of the grain,

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The sounds, the myriad sounds that charm
and thrill!
Oh, such a world! O happy man! Thank
God
That I have been allowed to hear and see!
For there be worlds where things are not
as here;
Where year by year and age succeeding age
No change of season comes, nor day and night,
But ever and unceasingly the glare
Of the huge, merciless sun upon one side,
Where all is trackless desert, and no life
Could hope to exist; and on the other half,
Turned to the stars, great continents of ice.
There, only in the intervening zone
Between the ice and desert, with the sun
On the horizon's verge, immovable
While the slow years swing round, are living
things.
And men are dulled with toil; a ceaseless
strife
For bare existence straining every power.
The steady ice-wind harnessed helps to bring
Ice for the starveling crops a niggard soil
Brings forth; and many a curious device
Has been employed to help, and wrench the
land
To sunward from the burning, ravening
waste.
No cloud that world beholds, and earth's
glad rain —

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How eyes would start and hearts o'erflow
to bless
The Giver, were such marvel to occur!
Yet flowers are there: — myself have seen
a flower,
Choice nurtured by an ancient, withered
crone,
With powers unfit for toil, allowed the ex-
pense
For such pursuit; but growing wild as here,—
He sure were held a madman who would give
Time and an inch of soil for such a thing.
Still, men live on, nor often rail at fate,
Knowing naught else. Were such a world
as this
Portrayed to them, they could not compre-
hend
But quick would brand the tale an idle
dream."
Then as he spoke, a bluebird from the wood
Flashed for a moment. With a quickdrawn
"Oh!"
The spirit disappeared and left me lone.
And I lay gazing at the smiling sky.

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THE GREAT VOID

Said one last night: "'Tis thought that Mars
is dead;
A lifeless hulk, a burned-out, barren world!"
And suddenly there came across my soul
A dreary sense of lost companionship;
A weight of loneliness in the great void.
I felt the earth pursue her silent course
Amid swift gliding ghosts of comrade worlds,
That pass and repass in an endless round:
Poor passionate Venus, of the fiery days;
Mars of the whirling moons and tempered
sun,
And ripened intellectuality,
(As one may guess) each but a shrivelled
corpse;
And circling still as in the happier years,
A ghastly smile upon the wan dead face,
The moon, lorn wraith of earth's primeval
love.
Now age is stealing on, and creeping cold
Invades the vitals of our weary world,
Dulled by the ancient horror, as she turns
To warm her at the sun's slow cooling fires.

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NIGHT RAMBLINGS

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SONG OF EUPHARIA

The hollow crashing
Of dark waves dashing,
The night wind rushing over wilds and waters
Make music glorious!
Through the tree-tops Boreas
Shrieks fierce and furious till each dead trunk totters.

The loon's laugh, hear it!
Like the storm spirit
When rude blasts bear it. In a lull birds twitter.
Storm-waked or dreaming,
Herons are screaming:
'Mid black clouds looming a rift and starry glitter.

With eye-balls glowing,
With white fangs showing,
Some fiend pursuing him, rushes a gaunt wolf by me.
Amid leaves fluttering
Voices are muttering,
To the elf sprites' gathering up this hill I hie me!

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THE NORTH TOWER

Last night, in some strange wilderness of thought,
(Where dreams embodied wear the guise of Fate,)
Again for my poor slain Ideal I fought,
I and the self I serve, yet serving hate.

Once more I slowly scaled the North Tower stair;
(Whispered the ivy and the dim stars shone),
When hard by a narrow window I was ware
Of a shadowy form that stood like sculptured stone.

Quickly I halted, held by ghostly fear:
(Out, bats, from the haunted place, in hurried flight!)
Yet stood I firm, and presently drew near
To scan the figure in the uncertain light.

Suddenly in my soul the whole truth rang.
(Was 't she that told me in the night wind's sigh?)
Knowledge brought action: at his throat I sprang,
Resolved that one or both of us should die!

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In his vile, thieving hands my gems he bore:
(Ah, she the brightest gone, what boot were they!)
Her hands had given them me, that nevermore
Might rise from the ebon couch where now she lay.

And I had seen her in her winding-sheet,
(And I had kissed her ere the moon had set.)
Now from the chapel, with reluctant feet
Turning, her murderer in his guilt I met.

"Fiend, thou hast slain her!" cried I, hot with wrath,
(And she so cold, that lay in peace below!)
"I know thee, that for years hast crossed my path,
To rob me of my best! Aye, now I know!

"Thou, whom I trusted; thou, whom I deemed true!."
(Too late, sweet spirit, is my sight unsealed.)
"Blind, and thrice blind, that ne'er till now I knew! —
Viper! prepare thy loathsome life to yield!"

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Oft had she warned me, yet I would not hear:
(Pure one, that heav'nward drew'st all thoughts with thee!)
My boon companion of the hunt why fear?
I, though I loved her, kept his company.

Fiercely we struggled: never word he spoke,
Till (cold, unsullied brow, blush not for shame!)
The word that spurred me to the last fell stroke,—
A foul aspersion on her maiden name.

I thought him dead when to my room I stole.
(Hark to the stag-hound's bay: the east is red.)
A groan was't from the stair without? Peace, soul:
What reck'st thou if he lives, when she is dead?

O'er the low hills the morning steals apace,
(Is this the world I loved, so cold and gray?)
To the wall, my glass: I would not see that face,
So like to his whom I have sought to slay!

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THE SHORES OF SLEEP

Often while waiting on the shores of sleep
Sweet visions come to me with outstretched hand
And smile of welcome: from a far-off land
Draw fairy barks, swift coursing o'er the deep:
From out the waves blithe, laughing maidens leap,
And dancing intertwine. Or o'er the strand
Veiled forms approach, and write upon the sand,
While awe and dread upon my spirit creep.
Then rise the waters, and oblivion
Carries me seaward, slowly, lullingly;
While the great tide, coursing resistless on
Obliterates all traces e'er the dawn
Of rune or footprint; and there come to me
New-born, but gleams from the untroubled sea.

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THE NIGHT MOTH

The night moth, sailing with nor goal nor chart
The wastes of air, recks not impending doom,
Her silken sails wove on a fairy loom,
And broidered in soft colors, every part
Designed with strange, inimitable art.
The worm's fruition, these few hours, the bloom
Of growth which did a weary while consume.
What aimless waste of power! — Is it, dear heart?
Who knows what souls there be, what forms conceal?
So to come perfect forth, full-fledged at birth,
Yet a child's charm in new sensations feel,—
Were it not ecstasy, think'st thou, and worth
An ordinary life, so we might steal
Its ineradicable stamp from earth?

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THE GRAY DAWN

Between my prison bars the gray dawn steals;
I feel the breath of morning on my hair:
The birds' gay greeting startles the still air,
As toward another day the glad world wheels.
O day that brings earth joy, my doom that deals,
The beauty of thy hills is past compare,
Where happy creatures flit, all free of care,
And of such burden as my breast conceals!
Hard is the world, that o'er its morning cup
My fate will read, with never twinge nor start;
Yawn and read on. Yet, soul, I would give thee up,
(What have I else?) if 'mongst the insensate throng
Were one more such! O God, make hard her heart,
Like these cold stones, that feel not shame nor wrong!

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RHAPSODY

I have a tryst to keep!
Gently the poplars sway,
And hear'st thou not a voice along the shore?
I leave thee books and sleep:
Thou wilt not bid me stay! —
Wind, through the welcoming dark I come once more!

Dear Wind, another kiss!
Enfold me in thy love!
Hast memory, comrade, of a night long past,
When on a shore like this,
Lone, save the stars above,
Thou foundest me, and I thy heart, at last?

In love aroused by thee
The ripples kissed the sand:
The leaves like lips atremble murmured low
Of night-brought mystery.
From lake to waiting land
Thou bor'st a gift of perfume,— long ago.

Ah, Wind, thus hast thou sued
Through ageless time, and gained
A legion loves beneath the moon and sun.
Thou prototype of mood,
Of fury unrestrained
And gentleness — I love thee, fickle one!

Here while the forest sleeps,
Life in a mask of death,
Give me thy message from the starry pole.
Out of the luminous deeps
Comes with thy living breath
A touch from the world-spirit to my soul!

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BY GATHERING GLOOMS

The noise upon the street grows less:
  The day's insistent cares retire:
  Beside my hearth my one desire
I sadly to my soul confess.
The huddling shadows round me press,
  And unaccustomed dread inspire:
  The flickering demons of the fire
Seem mocking at my loneliness.
"Love like a flame must disappear!
  This void a foretaste of thy lot,
Which weary years will bring," they jeer:
  "She spurns thy love: she loves thee not!"
And through my soul it echoes drear:
  "She has forgot! She has forgot!"

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TO A GHOST

What is this strange, unreasonable dread
Roused by unearthly sounds at noon of night:
Why should a stalwart soul be chilled with fright
At the light footfall of the unbodied dead?
Is it an instinct that the race has led
To flee from danger, as a fowl seeks flight
When the hawk looms, lest the wan phantom might
Usurp the form we have inherited?
But thou that in thy life-time held'st me dear
Hast not so changed that thou would'st drive away
My soul, even to escape thy wanderings drear
Among the tombs, fleeing the light of day.
If it may comfort thee, poor ghost, draw near:
My spirit shrinks not, but the ancestral clay!

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NIGHT VISION

All day, like children shut within a room,
We've played beneath our tent, the arching sky;
Performed our tasks beneath the Father's eye,
Unknowing why we did them or for whom.
But now the earth swings round into the gloom;
The canopy is furled, and we descry
The boundless plains of space wherein we lie,
Which distant watch-fires flickeringly illume.
So our soul's vision, blinded now, perchance,
By life's too great intensity, may be
Enlarged when life has faded, and the expanse
Which lies around us hid, clears to the view
Through that grim, dreaded dark; and we shall see
What place we occupied, and never knew.

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The torch laps greedily, the wood is piled;
And for the wickedness I wrought, though blindly,
I bide my doom, convicted, reconciled,
Beside my mirror; yea, and thank you kindly
That it burns with me; and for this my lute,
That once more it shall sound ere it be mute.

No blasphemy shall my poor story hold.
Though Satan's maid had her dominion o'er me,
I would entice no sheep from the Lord's fold,
His holy tabernacle here before me.
My grievous sinning I would but confess,
And paint a warning in my wickedness.

My father, much I fear, his soul had sold
To fathom mysteries forbid a mortal:
We all were certain that he made red gold,
And me he left this mirror, elf-land's portal!
But many a year lay hid its mystic power,
Till All Saints' Eve, once, at the witching hour.

Established in my father's room at home,
I gazed without: black was the night and dreary;
I had been brooding o'er a mighty tome,
Full of strange spells and of enchantments eerie.

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The mirror pictured somberly the room,
With but the forge-fire lighting up the gloom.

Wide-eyed I listened: mutterings dark and dire
In the wind's wailing seemed to threat and flout me;
For that I'd read that book and lit the fire,
With all my father's instruments about me.
Sudden I turned me from the night and storm:
Within the mirror moved an unknown form!

Awe-thrilled I saw a maiden enter there:
Down by the mirrored fire she quickly sat her
In the twin image of my easy-chair,
Though never a shadow occupied the latter.
Her beauty — ah! it filled my sinful heart,
For never did I dream 'twas Satan's art.

Silent I hid me in the curtain's fold,
Yet hoping, tremulous, that she might spy me;
But revery-rapt she sat till the bell tolled;
Then in the mirror seemed to glide close by me.
I hurried to the glass. She'd gone! Still swung
The cord that by the outer portal hung.

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It swung and stopped, but ever my heart thrilled on,
And still I waited for her glad returning:
The slow weeks passed, till a full year had gone,
With ne'er a token to assuage my yearning.
My duties lapsed, and oft I stayed from mass;
Which doubtless proves she was the devil's lass.

But all Saints' Eve and the hushed noon of night
Out of the darkness brought a new assurance:
She came, in a very halo of delight.
Thoughts of her going pricked me past endurance:
And to the glass I strode: — my hand went through:
Naught but thin air there was between us two!

Awe stopped me, and I stood a moment: then
Stepped through the mirror, for I dared not dally.—
The room had vanished, with the world of men,
And we two were alone in a green valley.
I saw no mirror when I turned my head,
Only a cave's mouth looming black instead.

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There sat my lady on a mossy stone:
The noon sun poured a golden radiance o'er her:
She turned not round, but spoke in silvery tone,
Gazing half shyly at a brook before her.
Sweeter her words were than cathedral song:
"O dearest love," she said, "I have waited long!"

Like lovers, hand in hand we wandered free;
Yet she was mistress, and I served her pleasure:
Difficult were the tasks she set for me,
But truth she paid them with a brimming measure.
A measure of meed, ah me! a brimming bliss,
For which a thousand times I would suffer this!

And many a day those devious paths we trod,
While my whole soul seemed raised to a loftier level,
And rendered in its ignorance thanks to God;
For little did I deem her of the devil!
Yea, till this very hour I should not know,
Had not his reverence plainly told us so.

We strayed through groves and meads of fairest flowers,
And ate of honeyed fruits from fields elysian:

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Bliss of a life-time in a few short hours
  Was mine, in many a fleeting, fairy vision,
Odor of asphodel and joy of song.
How could I ever dream her heart was wrong!

Do you remember songs that I have sung,—
  Some air so sweet that in the ear it lingers?
All, all were hers, caught by my feeble tongue,
  And taught me by her dancing, dimpled
    fingers.
Did a suspicion cross my heart or yours
Of Satan, master of a thousand lures?

For she was gentle, kind to high and low,
  And had for children sweets and tales
    unfailing.
'Tis true she frowned not on the church's foe:
  Him too her magic cured if he were ailing.
One day the bishop's maid she healed with it,
Who had been scourged for doubting Holy
    Writ.

Merry she was, her laughter silvery sweet;
  Her smile all coy, yet maidenly inviting.—
Answering questions, I would here repeat
  That never was I asked to sign a writing.
But as the reverend bishop says, this shows
The deeper cunning, and he surely knows.

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Thenceforth the mirror's gate I passed at will,
If but the stars were bright at the night's summit;
Though oft I stepped out on a rocky hill
Into a desert world, my maid gone from it.
A memorable once to me she came,
And woke me by the murmur of my name!

But I repent me of each evil deed,
That thus with Satan's chain I rashly bound me:
Thrice cautioned by the priest, I gave no heed,
Her magic coils wound round and still around me.
Blind as I was, and blind as I am; undone
By the foul cunning of the Evil One!

Come, light your faggots! Well are they deserved.
I loved this witch-maid; yet ye shall discover
I take the doom I merit not unnerved!
I loved her, — God forgive me! — still would love her!
Her voice, her smile my soul would still entice:
She seemed an angel out of Paradise!

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Those souls whose blind decision
Rejects the higher vision,
Souls in whom not as yet, through fault or fate, the spirit thrives,
Furthered by pain still wander
Toward the same goal out yonder,
But deeper in shadows and perchance through tenfold lives.
Oh, foolish ones, to barter wings for gyves!

The sun was on the clover
And morning mass just over
As I wandered home with Angela through fields aglow with June.
Her calm, supernal beauty
Made me in love with duty:
The commonplace was glorified, all life atune.
Ah, why is bliss so frail beneath the moon!

Regretful winds were sighing
And night-clouds wildly flying
When I rode to meet dark Norna of the saucy, hazel eyes.
And the clouds grew black and larger
As I urged my willing charger,
Remembering her laughter and her low replies;
Her sweet, low laughter, blent with little sighs.

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My heart could not forget her!
By the trysting tree I met her,
And we wandered near the haunted river in
the whispering night.
Unseeing I felt the burning
Of her eyes: her lips upturning
Met mine, and made me drunken with
a fierce delight;
Bewitched all senses but my cheated sight.

Swift hours flow by unheeded
When lovers meet as we did,
Lit by the gleams from their own eyes, the
stern stars overcast.
We'd left the chiding river,
When I heard, with inward quiver,
Low voices near us in the forest as we passed.
Was it? Or but the muttering of the blast?

The rising tempest found us
When the rocks closed in around us:
We seemed its fiery nucleus: at us its wrath
was hurled.
The lightning's flashes blended
And fierce the rain descended.
What ho! I seek a shelter from a drowning
world;
A nitch for Norna, where the storm is furled!

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The thunder rolled unceasing
And the deluge was increasing,
Amid the crash of stricken trees. I glanced at Norna's face.
No fear had she! She reveled
In the storm: with hair disheveled
And wind-blown cloak, she seemed a sprite of some elfin race;
No mortal, but a weird of that wild place!

In glee her lips were parted,
When I touched her arm,— and started.
"Why Norna, are you witch indeed? Your very cloak is dry!"
What thought lights up her features?
She speaks to two odd creatures
Approached in an interval of dark, and going by;
Strange, uncouth words, and gruesome: I know not why.

These seem a man and woman,
But sure they are not human!
See how the haggard faces leer! They've wickedness in mind!
Immediately after
Their shrill, unearthly laughter
Congeals my blood, in spite of reason, dumb and blind!
Black is the lightning's lapse, with those behind!

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"Norna, am I a dreamer?"
I ask, with sudden tremor;
"Shall all these blissful, baleful fancies
vanish with the day? —
See now, they follow, follow,
Their staring eyes all hollow,
And hungry as the tomb. Now tell me, who
are they?
How is't you know these shapes that cross
our way?

"See, everywhere they linger.
Look! Look!" My trembling finger
Points to a dark form here and there,
crouched like an evil bird.
But Norna taps my shoulder,
And we seat us on a boulder,
While on her lips there is a smile, but not
a word.
Nearer the crackling of the brush is heard!

The tempest had subsided,
And at times the calm moon glided
Between the clouds. The eldritch shapes
drew nearer and more near.
Of a sudden they rushed around me
With a shriek, and caught and bound me,
Though I fought with desperation and a
mortal fear,
And shouted, vainly, far from human ear!

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By hand and foot they tie me
Flat on the rock, and eye me
With a horrid light in dull, dead eyes, all greedy for my life!
But heaven steals my senses
Ere the grim feast commences,
For I swoon when from her bosom Norna draws a knife!
O Norna, near thy heart, with murder rife!

* * * *

Is't I, so weary, weary?
Where are those creatures eerie?
Lightly my withes I loosened when I woke in the chill dawn.
My clothes are old and tattered,
And with my blood are spattered,
Above my wounded breast, and all my strength is gone!
Liefer were death than this, all strength withdrawn!

My steed is at his tether,
Safe kept in the June weather.
'Tis only I have seen the flight of years in a single night!
See, Norna's hand waves mocking
As I pass her, feebly rocking
Upon my weary saddle, home-bound in sorry plight.
She laughs at lovers stricken by her blight!

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The sun is on the clover,
But the summer, passing over,
Gives back the vigor charily which laughing
Norna stole.
Pure Angela's existence
I touch but at a distance;
Fearing my pallid cheek betray a sickly soul;
Fearing her scorn if she should guess the
whole!

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SUNNY MEADS

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MOONSHINE

In spectral blue and in ghostly white,
  By the feeble beams of a crescent moon,
In the forest depths of a summer night
  Dance half-seen forms to a half-heard tune.

Scarcely the leaves by the breeze are stirred;
  Slowly the mists from the marsh-grass rise.
In the boughs there's the chirp of a drowsy
    bird;
  In the thicket the gleaming of fairy eyes!

Under the shadow of elm and oak
  Two wanderers passed ere the moon had
    set;
One saw no sign of the fairy folk,
  And the other one saw — what he'll ne'er
    forget!

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HURO'S SONG

Like the mirage, enticing
Across the burning plain,
Like the rainbow rising
After days of rain
Is she I love, whose image my heart doth bear,
So unattainable is she, so fair!

Like the starry glimmer
Of a summer night,
Like the snowy shimmer
On some mountain height
Are her soul's beauties, e'en as her features are,
So pure, so fair, but ah, from me so far!

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LOVE SONG

A peace celestial broods over lake and woods
As the long shadows mark the day's declining:
From depths below, above, all earth breathes love, my love,
And bids me woo thee, all my heart divining.

"Love her!" the rushes sigh as the boat slips by:
So call the keen-eyed birds that o'er us hover.
"Will this peace last for her if I my love aver?"
Softly the south wind answers, "Love her! Love her!"

Under the fostering rays of this day of days
All love might blossom as the lilies yonder.
Woo her, O sky and lake! Love in her heart awake,
My love to prove when through dark ways we wander.

In a resplendent glow now the sun sinks low,
A lavish golden flood o'er all outpouring.
Love, in thy dear eyes, ere the daylight dies,
Let me read yielding to my fond imploring!

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THE GROUNDS OF THE GRIND

A woman set a darnin' wunst on her husband's Sunday socks,
And her tabby laid and watched her, perched on a lofty box.
Sh'she, a speakin' to herself: "It's most a quarter to:
I must be gettin' supper, or there'll be a how-de-do.
And thisher mendin's not half through, and lots o' ironin' yet
To do, and when the plates is washed and that I'll have to set
Up half the night to finish this. Tomorrow I must bake,
And do a heap. Tomorrow's full enough, for pity's sake!
With all this fret and worry" sh'she, "I hope I'll be forgiven
'F I say that I can't fairly see how life is wuth the livin'!"
And she kind o' leaned back, weary like, and sort o' closed her eyes;
When a voice beside her made her jump and start up with surprise.
Said the fat, yellow cat: "What makes you slave like that?"
She turned around and eyed him, and she says: "I guess you'd see

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If you'd meals to get, and mendin', and no
end o' work, like me.
If I could loaf around like you, and get along
without
So many sorts o' victuals fixed just so, and
go about
In plain clo'es; if they wa'n't no stoves, no
starch, nor flats, nor a heap
O' dishes and of furniture, and things to dust
and sweep"—
Said the fat, yellow cat: "It's entertaining,
that,
For man, the king, is suffering, a slave to
things: that's pat!"
"Well, I should like it mighty well," sh'she,
"if I could lie
And sun myself and let things go awhile
afore I die.
But that's a lazy feelin', and I'd ought to be
ashamed;
And I better keep it to myself, or get most
turrible blamed.
It ain't improvin' to the mind to loaf round
in the sun:
I'd better go on slavin', if it ain't a deal o'
fun."
Said the cat, kind o' flat: "Is your mind
improved by that?
Are your morals any better for a feather in
your hat?
Is your intelleck less slow 'cause you eat your
food just so?

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Are you much less of a sinner for three
courses at your dinner?
Since we chat," said the cat, "would you
kindly prove me that?"
And then he yawned and squinted at her,
kind o' sleepy-eyed,
And how she'd better answer him she
couldn't quite decide.
And she went to sleep while ponderin' on
this weighty theme she set,
When her husband he comes in and says:
"Ain't supper ready yet?"

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MY LADY'S EYES

There are two windows o'er the way,
  Each with a half-closed blind:
My lady, sunny as the day,
  Peers blithely from behind.

Often my roving glance she's met:
  She knows (for the world may see)
How humble is my lot; and yet
  She sometimes smiles at me.

Little she guesses that I keep,
  Locked in an inner room,
Her portrait, from all eyes hid deep:
  Ah, that I dare presume!

If I should bring it to her sight
  Would those fringed curtains rise
And let a scornful angry light
  Break from my lady's eyes?

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AS WINGS THE BEE

As wings the yellow bee her beat
  Where harebell nods and sunbeam dances
So day by day I seek my sweet,
  For honeyed smiles and mocking glances;

And home my burden bear of bliss
  Through dewy eve and fields elysian,
And seem to skim the earth with this
  My treasure, hid from mortal vision.

O south wind, toying with her hair,
  O robin, warbling in the arbor,
Spread not my secret to the air:
  A sweet discretion pray you harbor,

While in her bower I seek my sweet,
  For loving look and playful sally,
As wings the yellow bee her beat
  Through shadowy copse and flowery valley.

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OLD ACQUAINTANCE

I saw just now upon the street
  Amid the passing stream
A face seraphically sweet,
  With eyes from the land of dream.
An old familiar look she wore,
Whom yet I never saw before.

I never saw, I said? No no,
  We met the other day —
An eon more or less ago —
  Upon the milky way.
Then she'd a star upon her brow;
Methought I caught its radiance now!

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LITTLE WILD ROSE

The little white rabbit lies snug in his bed
  Away from the frosts and snows:
The trees are all sleeping till winter be fled,
And fast asleep 'neath her downy spread
  Is the little wild rose.

The fields lie white in the silvery moon:
  A star on the hilltop glows.
The winds of winter a sleep-song croon;
But winter will vanish and spring come soon
  For the little wild rose.

Sleep, sleep, my darling: grow strong and true
  In the love that about thee flows.
Thou shalt wake, and drink of the sun and the dew,
And give of thy gladness to all anew,
  My little wild rose!

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AT THREE MONTHS

There are bright things that glitter and
glance,
And dull ones I like but ill:
There are things that wiggle and dance,
And things that are always still.
I gaze and I gaze, at will,
But no pleasure like this can arise,
As I lie and take my fill,
And gaze in my mother's eyes!

What wonderful things befall!
What visions rise and sink!
Can I touch that bright spot on the wall
With my finger, do you think?
I can scarcely take time to wink
Lest something new might arise;
But I do love to lie here and drink,
And gaze in my mother's eyes!

The things that the big folk do
Are funny enough, say I:
One has to gurgle and coo,
When they twist their faces awry.
My mother's my source of supply.
How good she is, and how wise!
I drink it all in as I lie
And gaze up into her eyes!

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A TOAST TO JOY

Our care to the air we fling
  And a bumper to joy we drain!
Misfortune, like snow in the spring,
  May bury the sprouting grain;
And life may be chill, and hope seem dead,
But soon it is certain to raise its head.
  And it's good for your soul, you know:
  There is nothing for crops like snow!

Joy, joy, joy is the primitive, protean stuff
  Of the world and the stars and the angels' wings;
And here's to the man that is wise enough
  To gather it in as he works and sings,
  (The joy that fills up the chinks of things!)
Undaunted by Fortune's bluff!

O man is a groveling mole,
  That skulks in his burrow from birth:
He treasures the thought of a soul,
  But he loves the smell of the earth.
Though flowers are bright, and sunny the skies,
It's seldom he ventures to raise his eyes.
  He's practical, there is the rub!
  He's nosing around for a grub!
    And it's joy, joy, joy, etc.

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Old Care is a merry buffoon,
Whose favorite butt is man.
He plays him a doleful tune,
And gets him to dance if he can.
"One would think that the birds would
remain unfed
And the world stop short if he bowed his
head,
Such airs has the midget," says he:
"He's legitimate prey for me!"
But it's joy, joy, joy, etc.

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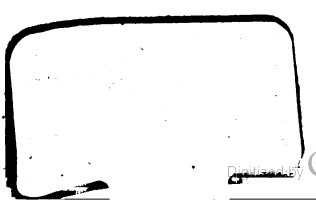

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